

REMARKSStatus of the Claims

Claim 1 is the only claim currently pending in the above-identified application. No claims have been added. Claims 2 and 3 have been canceled. Claim 1 has been amended to redefine the golf ball as a three piece golf ball. Support for this amendment is found at original claim 3 and figure 1. Claim 1 has been amended to redefine the diameter of the inner core. Support for this amendment is found at page 10, line 21. Claim 1 has also been amended to redefine the center hardness. Support is found at page 12, line 7. Claim 1 has also been amended to redefine the outer core hardness and thickness. Support for these amendments is found at page 12, line 20 and page 13, line 17. No new matter has been added by the claim amendments.

Rejection under 35 USC 103(a)

The Examiner rejects claims 1-3 as obvious over Nakahara et al. USP 5,002,281 (Nakahara '281) in view of Hiraoka et al. USP 5,711,723 (Hiraoka '723). Applicants traverse the rejection and respectfully request the withdrawal thereof.

Applicants submit that the present invention is directed to a three-piece solid golf ball having a core consisting of an inner core, an outer core and one layer covering the core having the

particular specifications for hardness and thickness as recited in claim 1.

Applicants submit that the present invention is not obvious over the combination of Nakahara '281 and Hiraoka '723.

Nakahara discloses a three piece golf ball having a solid core consisting of an inner core and an outer shell. The hardness of the inner core increases at a distance of 5 to 10 mm from the center point. Likewise, in the outer shell, the hardness difference between the surface hardness of the shell and center point of the inner core increases more than 10 from the center. The cover of the golf ball disclosed in Nakahara '281 is a thermoplastic resin. The cover hardness is not disclosed.

Hiraoka '723 discloses a three piece golf ball with an inner core, outer core and a cover. The hardness difference between the center and surface of the inner core is not more than 4. The outer core has a hardness difference between the center and surface of not more than 4. The cover of the golf ball disclosed in Hiraoka '723 is a combination of an ionomer resin and a thermoplastic resin, such as polyamide. The cover hardness is disclosed as 59 to 70 Shore D.

Applicants submit that Nakahara '281 fails to disclose or suggest a cover with a combination of an ionomer resin and a thermoplastic elastomer or diene block copolymer. In addition, Nakahara '281 fails to disclose or suggest the instant hardness

range between the outer core and the inner core and the newly recited surface hardness in Shore D hardness of 66 to 69. Nakahara '281 only mentions a surface hardness in Table 1 of the reference. The surface hardness disclosed is Shore D 70. Clearly, this surface hardness is outside the claimed range of 66 to 69 as recited in claim 1. As such, Nakahara '281 fails to disclose the recited specifications of the claimed three-piece solid golf ball.

Applicants submit that Hiraoka '723 fails to add the missing elements so that one of ordinary skill in the art could arrive at the present invention. The present invention has a JIS-C hardness at a distance of 15 mm from the center point of the inner core of 65 to 85 and higher than the center point by 5 to 20. On the other hand, Hiraoka '723 discloses a similar hardness difference that is outside the claimed range. The Hiraoka '723 hardness difference between the center and surface is not more than 4. As such, this element of the claimed invention is not met by the combination of references.

Also, the combination of references fails to disclose the outer core hardness difference between the surface of the outer core and the center point of the inner core. In the present invention the hardness difference is defined by the surface hardness being 15 to 30 harder than the center. Nakahara '281 merely discloses that there is an increase in hardness of 10 from the center. This is outside the claimed range. Hiraoka

'723 discloses that the hardness difference between the surface and the center is not more than 4. This limitation too is outside the claimed range. As such, the combination of references also fails to met this claim limitation.

Moreover, the present invention has a cover that is a combination of ionomer resin and at least one of thermoplastic elastomer or diene block copolymer. Even the combination of Nakahara '281, a thermoplastic resin, and Hiraoka '723, a combination of ionomer resin and thermoplastic resin (that is not an elastomer or diene block copolymer), does not disclose the specific cover of the present invention.

Inasmuch as these three elements of the present invention discussed above are neither disclosed nor suggested by the combination of art, Applicants submit that the Examiner has not made a proper *prima facie* case of obviousness and the rejection should be withdrawn and the claims allowed.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Kecia Reynolds (Reg. No. 47,021) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

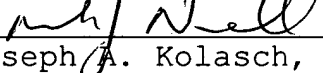
Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the application by this Amendment.

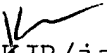
Pursuant to the provisions of 37 C.F.R. § 1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicants hereby petition for an extension of two (2) months to November 27, 2002 for the period in which to file a response to the outstanding Office Action. The required fee of \$400.00 is attached hereto.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By  36,625
Joseph A. Kolasch, #22,463


JAK/RJR/jao
0020-4657P

P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000

Attachment: Version with Markings to Show Changes Made

(Rev. 02/20/02)

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 2 and 3 are canceled.

The claims have been amended as follows:

Claim 1. (Twice amended) A [multi-piece] three piece solid golf ball comprising a core consisting of an inner core and an outer core formed on the inner core, and one [or more layers] layer of cover covering the core,

wherein the inner core has a diameter of [30 to 39.5] 32.5 to 38.5 mm and a center hardness in JIS-C hardness of [55 to 70] ³⁷⁻⁴³ 59 to 67, and is formed from a press molded rubber composition comprising polybutadiene, a co-crosslinking agent, an organic peroxide and a filler, and the JIS-C hardness at a distance of 15 mm from the center point of the inner core is ⁴¹⁻⁵⁷ 65 to 85 and is higher than the center hardness by 5 to 20,

the outer core has a thickness of [0.3 to 2.0] 0.5 to 1.8 mm and a surface hardness in JIS-C hardness of [75 to 90] ⁵²⁻⁵⁹ 79 to 88, and is formed from a press molded rubber composition comprising polybutadiene, a co-crosslinking agent, an organic peroxide and a filler, and the surface hardness of the outer core is higher than the center hardness of the inner core by 15 to 30, and

the cover is formed from a combination of an ionomer resin and at least one of thermoplastic elastomer or diene block copolymer, and the [outmost] cover layer has a thickness of 1.5 to 2.5 mm and a surface hardness in Shore D hardness of 66 to 69.